

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for sorting search results according to a buyer profile during the matching phase of an electronic commerce transaction, comprising:

a database containing a buyer profile associated with a buyer, the buyer profile comprising a record of the number of times each of a plurality of sort criteria has appeared in at least some previous events involving the buyer; and

a server operable to:

receive a plurality of search results communicated from one or more seller databases in response to an under-constrained search query in which exact attribute values are not specified for one or more attributes;

access the buyer profile to determine an order of display based on the number of times one or more sort criteria in the buyer profile applicable to the search results have appeared in the previous events involving the buyer;

sort the search results according to the determined order of display; and

communicate the sorted search results to the buyer.

2. The system of Claim 1, wherein an attribute value is selected from the group consisting of a product attribute value and a seller attribute value.

3. The system of Claim 1, wherein a sort criterion is selected from the group consisting of a product attribute, a product attribute value, a seller attribute, and a seller attribute value.

4. The system of Claim 1, wherein an event is selected from the group consisting of a search query, a sort request, and a search result selection.

5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the server is operable to determine the order of display according to the number of times each of a plurality of attribute values has appeared in events involving the buyer.

6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the server is operable to determine the order of display according to the number of times each of a plurality of attributes has appeared in events involving the buyer.

5 7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the server is operable to determine the order of display according to the number of times a leading attribute value for each of a plurality of attributes has appeared in events involving the buyer, a leading attribute value for an attribute being the attribute value appearing more often than any other attribute value for the attribute.

10 8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the buyer profile comprises a record of the number of times each of a plurality of sort criteria has appeared in a specified number of recent events involving the buyer.

15 9. The system of Claim 1, wherein the server is further operable to delete a record for a sort criterion from the buyer profile if the sort criterion has not appeared within a predetermined period of time or within a specified number of recent events.

20 10. The system of Claim 9, wherein the server is further operable to:  
notify the buyer before deleting the sort criterion; and  
not delete the sort criterion if the buyer indicates the sort criterion should not be deleted.

25 11. The system of Claim 1, wherein the search query is under-constrained in that no attribute values are specified for one or more attributes.

12. A method of sorting search results according to a buyer profile during the matching phase of an electronic commerce transaction, comprising:

receiving a plurality of search results communicated from one or more seller databases in response to an under-constrained search query in which exact attribute values are not specified for one or more attributes;

accessing a buyer profile associated with a buyer, the buyer profile comprising a record of the number of times each of a plurality of sort criteria has appeared in at least some previous events involving the buyer;

determining an order of display based on the number of times one or more sort criteria in the buyer profile applicable to the search results have appeared in the previous events involving the buyer;

sorting the search results according to the determined order of display; and communicating the sorted search results to the buyer.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein an attribute value is selected from the group consisting of a product attribute value and a seller attribute value.

14. The method of Claim 12, wherein a sort criterion is selected from the group consisting of a product attribute, a product attribute value, a seller attribute, and a seller attribute value.

15. The method of Claim 12, wherein an event is selected from the group consisting of a search query, a sort request, and a search result selection.

16. The method of Claim 12, wherein the determined order of display is based on the number of times each of a plurality of attribute values has appeared in events involving the buyer.

17. The method of Claim 12, wherein the determined order of display is based on the number of times each of a plurality of attributes has appeared in events involving the buyer.

18. The method of Claim 12, wherein the determined order of display is based on the number of times a leading attribute value for each of a plurality of attributes has appeared in events involving the buyer, a leading attribute value for an attribute being the attribute value appearing more often than any other attribute value for the attribute.

19. The method of Claim 12, wherein the buyer profile comprises a record of the number of times each of a plurality of sort criteria has appeared in a specified number of recent events involving the buyer.

20. The method of Claim 12, further comprising deleting a record for a sort criterion from the buyer profile if the sort criterion has not appeared within a predetermined period of time or within a specified number of recent events.

21. The method of Claim 12, further comprising:  
determining that a sort criterion has not appeared within a predetermined period of time or within a specified number of recent events;  
notifying the buyer that the record for the sort criterion may be deleted;  
deleting the sort criterion if the buyer indicates the sort criterion be deleted;  
and  
not deleting the sort criterion if the buyer indicates the sort criterion should not be deleted.

22. The method of Claim 12, wherein the search query is under-constrained in that no attribute values are specified for one or more attributes.

23. Software for sorting search results according to a buyer profile during the matching phase of an electronic commerce transaction, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:

receive a plurality of search results communicated from one or more seller databases in response to an under-constrained search query in which exact attribute values are not specified for one or more attributes;

access a buyer profile associated with a buyer, the buyer profile comprising a record of the number of times each of a plurality of sort criteria has appeared in at least some previous events involving the buyer;

determine an order of display based on the number of times one or more sort criteria in the buyer profile applicable to the search results have appeared in the previous events involving the buyer;

sort the search results according to the determined order of display; and  
communicate the sorted search results to the buyer.

24. The software of Claim 23, wherein an attribute value is selected from the group consisting of a product attribute value and a seller attribute value.

25. The software of Claim 23, wherein a sort criterion is selected from the group consisting of a product attribute, a product attribute value, a seller attribute, and a seller attribute value.

26. The software of Claim 23, wherein an event is selected from the group consisting of a search query, a sort request, and a search result selection.

27. The software of Claim 23, wherein the determined order of display is based on the number of times each of a plurality of attribute values has appeared in events involving the buyer.

28. The software of Claim 23, wherein the determined order of display is based on the number of times each of a plurality of attributes has appeared in events involving the buyer.

29. The software of Claim 23, wherein the determined order of display is based on the number of times a leading attribute value for each of a plurality of attributes has appeared in events involving the buyer, a leading attribute value for an attribute being the attribute value appearing more often than any other attribute value for the attribute.

30. The software of Claim 23, wherein the buyer profile comprises a record of the number of times each of a plurality of sort criteria has appeared in a specified number of recent events involving the buyer.

31. The software of Claim 23, further operable to delete the record for the sort criterion from the buyer profile if the sort criterion has not appeared within a predetermined period of time or within a specified number of recent events.

32. The software of Claim 23, further operable to:  
notify the buyer before deleting the sort criterion; and  
not delete the sort criterion if the buyer indicates the sort criterion should not be deleted.

33. The software of Claim 23, wherein the search query is under-constrained in that no attribute values are specified for one or more attributes.

34. A system for sorting search results according to a buyer profile during the matching phase of an electronic commerce transaction, comprising:

a database containing a buyer profile associated with a buyer, the buyer profile comprising a record of the number of times each of a plurality of attribute values has been specified in at least some previous search queries received from the buyer, each attribute value being a product attribute value or a seller attribute value; and

a server operable to:

receive a plurality of search results communicated from one or more seller databases in response to an under-constrained search query in which exact attribute values are not specified for one or more attributes;

access the buyer profile to determine an order of display of the search results based on the number of times one or more of the attribute values in the buyer profile that correspond to the attribute values left unspecified in the search query have been specified in the previous search queries received from the buyer, such that a first search result comprising a first attribute value that has been specified in a first number of previous search queries received from the buyer will be displayed within an ordered list ahead of a second search result comprising a second attribute value that has been specified in a second number of previous search queries received from the buyer if the first number is greater than the second number;

sort the search results according to the determined order of display; and

communicate the sorted search results to the buyer.

35. A method of sorting search results according to a buyer profile during the matching phase of an electronic commerce transaction, comprising:

receiving a plurality of search results communicated from one or more seller databases in response to a an under-constrained search query in which exact attribute values are not specified for one or more attributes;

accessing a buyer profile associated with a buyer, the buyer profile comprising a record of the number of times each of a plurality of attribute values has been specified in at least some previous search queries received from the buyer, each attribute value being a product attribute value or a seller attribute value;

determining an order of display of the search results based on the number of times one or more of the attribute values in the buyer profile that correspond to the attribute values left unspecified in the search query have been specified in the previous search queries received from the buyer, such that a first search result comprising a first attribute value that has been specified in a first number of previous search queries received from the buyer will be displayed within an ordered list ahead of a second search result comprising a second attribute value that has been specified in a second number of previous search queries received from the buyer if the first number is greater than the second number;

sorting the search results according to the determined order of display; and communicating the sorted search results to the buyer.

36. Software for sorting search results according to a buyer profile during the matching phase of an electronic commerce transaction, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:

5 receive a plurality of search results communicated from one or more seller databases in response to a an under-constrained search query in which exact attribute values are not specified for one or more attributes;

10 access a buyer profile associated with a buyer, the buyer profile comprising a record of the number of times each of a plurality of attribute values has been specified in at least some previous search queries received from the buyer, each attribute value being a product attribute value or a seller attribute value;

15 determine an order of display of the search results based on the number of times one or more of the attribute values in the buyer profile that correspond to the attribute values left unspecified in the search query have been specified in the previous search queries received from the buyer, such that a first search result comprising a first attribute value that has been specified in a first number of previous search queries received from the buyer will be displayed within an ordered list ahead of a second search result comprising a second attribute value that has been specified in a second number of previous search queries received from the buyer if the first number is greater than the second number;

20 sort the search results according to the determined order of display; and  
communicate the sorted search results to the buyer.